

Lost in Plain Sight

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Summary

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Description:

The crew gets lost in Fossil Roo. When they split up into twos, Garnet thinks she's going to have to spend the day fending off Zidane's advances instead of looking for an exit, but he keeps throwing her off her guard. A little romance that can be easily inserted into the plot of FFIIX.

1. Lost in Plain Sight

They had been lost for three days and it was beginning to seem like they would have to find another way to reach the outer continent.

Garnet had thought that Fossil Roo was merely home to an unassuming mining operation. When they arrived, she found it was more of an ancient ruin, filled with booby-traps and bounty hunters. Now, after seventy-two hours within the confines of its tunnels, it seemed that it was actually a sprawling labyrinth.

Everyone was beginning to show the strain. Quina, an acquaintance of Zidane and Vivi, was eating absolutely everything; every wayward monster that crossed their path, every little leaf that managed to sprout in the darkness of the caverns. Garnet even saw it licking rocks. She had never met a creature like Quina before, but she was willing to excuse the behavior as some kind of worrying stress response.

Little Vivi, though, was getting claustrophobic, and even Zidane's mood had begun to plummet. He was going on two hours without speaking to anyone

and the absence of his friendly chatter was greatly felt as they walked through the echoing silence of the tunnels. As for Garnet herself, she found that she was beginning to suspect the mine of some kind of supernatural subterfuge. The longer they spent underground, the more questions cropped up: Who was *actually* buying all of this ore? Why were people mining in such a dangerous place? Where did they live and why did they never seem to go home? Could it be that they were actually ghosts?

Garnet knew she had to take control of her imagination before she started to lose it, but really! Why couldn't they find the exit?

They were all briefly hopeful when the Gargant took them to a fresh smelling room with a strong breeze and fountains spouting clear jets of water into a small pool, but after exploring the paths and vine covered walls, they found they had reached another dead end. Zidane sat down on the ledge that had led them into the room, kicking irritably at the vines below his feet. Vivi and Quina sagged. Since they were in this position because of her, Garnet thought it was her responsibility to boost everyone back up.

“Maybe we should go back and change the last track... Or... or perhaps we could try to dig into

these vines a bit more. There could be a tunnel hidden somewhere. We... we could split up for maximum efficiency!”

Zidane looked back at her over his shoulder, calculating. Then he shrugged.

“Why not? We could handle these monsters blindfolded at this point. We should be safe in twos.”

Garnet walked up to the ledge with a sigh of relief, gazing about the room. It almost felt like they were above ground, with leaves swaying in the breeze and water moistening the air. The exit had to be somewhere close by...

“Me and Dagger will see if we can find some new paths up under these vines. Vivi, you and Quina go try hitting some switches.”

“You and I? Shouldn’t one of us stay with Vivi?” Garnet asked, trying to mask her real concern with concern for Vivi. Maybe she should have had more trust in Zidane by now, but she was well aware of how his mind worked. The two of them on their own in an isolated cave was just the kind of situation he would try to create.

“Vivi and Quina aren’t the best climbers,” Zidane said casually. Too casually. It was actually more alarming that he *didn’t* try to crack a joke about them being alone together.

Maybe he really is tired.

“I no like heights,” Quina supplied, stepping behind Vivi defensively. Vivi looked up at her from under his hat, “M-me neither...”

Zidane stood up, pulling his pouch around, “Here, we’ll split the supplies. If you run low or get lost, stay by one of the miners, ok? Let’s meet back here in an hour or so.”

Before Garnet could think of any more objections, Vivi and Quina were plucking Gargant weed and disappearing on the back of one of the giant insects. She glanced at Zidane, who smiled at her. And it wasn’t his default, “I’m-just-a-harmless-young-man-with-a-tail” smile, either.

Stupid her for assuming Zidane could *ever* be too tired to flirt.

“So, Princess. I’ve finally got you right where I want you,” he said, mockingly sinister, his tail lashing back and forth.

“In a cave, covered in dirt?” she replied dryly.

“You can’t say that it’s an unoriginal idea for a date.”

Garnet placed her hand on the new racket that dangled on her hip, “This isn’t just for healing, you know.”

“Alright, alright,” Zidane sighed, dropping the act and turning to stare up at the vines, “I guess we can take another look around up there. But for the record, I can think of better uses of our time.”

“You don’t think there’s a way out somewhere in here?”

Zidane shrugged, “We looked. If there was a path, I’d have seen it.”

“But there has to be something! Maybe there’s a cave behind the vines and it’s just over grown. This room is so different than the others! It can’t be a coincidence!” Garnet argued, slightly desperate.

“I think the exit is at the end of one of these Gargant tracks and we haven’t found the switch yet... but hey, you could be on to something here. So, you want to climb up first? If you go ahead of me, I can catch you if you start to fall.”

“I’ve already made the mistake of letting you climb behind me once before. I won’t be repeating it.”

“You’re still thinking about the airship? That was an accident. My only concern now is your safety,” he said. But when she crossed her arms and waited, he sighed again and grabbed hold of a handful of vines. She followed his lead and they began to climb, his tail swishing in and out of her view, occasionally pulling at a clump of vines like a fifth limb.

The foliage was thick and fragrant and wet, with tiny rivulets of water trickling down the smooth rock face behind it. The fountain heads spewed seemingly at random, but Zidane was good at leading them out of the sprays as they made their way to the top of the cavern. Unfortunately, Garnet had discovered nothing but rock behind the vines. As she reached into an especially thick patch of leaves, trying to feel the stone beneath it, her foothold slipped. Her grip, unprepared to support the weight of her body, failed, and she felt her side scrape against the rock as she began to fall.

She had time for a short scream before she landed in the water below, thankfully not hitting the edge of

the cliff on her way down. She sunk straight to the bottom, expelling her breath as she blinked through the crystal clear water. Zidane crashed into view a few seconds later in an explosion of bubbles. He swam right toward her, clearly on a rescue mission, but she waved him off and began to make her way to the shore.

“You almost missed the pond, you know,” Zidane said as soon as her head breeched the surface, “I saw my life flash before my eyes.”

“Isn’t that my line?”

“Maybe, but I’m not kidding,” he said, crawling to his feet as they reached the bank, “Are you hurt?”

“A few scratches, maybe, but I’m alright,” she said, rolling up her sleeve to reveal no broken skin. It was too soon to see if it would bruise.

“Come sit down,” he said, “We’ll dry off for a minute.”

They sat down and leaned against the smooth rocks, just around the corner from the pond. The wind was stronger there, or maybe she just felt it more because she was soaked. Zidane a seat directly beside her, their sides touching.

“It’s cold,” he said, tossing his wet gloves and pack on the ground and starting on his shoes. Garnet did the same without comment. If he was going to make a move of some kind, well... she’d show him cold.

With most of their belongings laid out in front of them, Garnet leaned back and stared up at the cavern’s high ceiling.

“Are we ever going to get out of here?” She wondered.

“I guess if we can’t then we can just live here. Settle down, start a family... A giant hole in the ground full of monsters seems like the perfect place to raise a few kids.”

Garnet snorted, “They’ll grow up to be Gargant tamers.”

“Yeah. I’ll become a miner... and finally figure out what these guys are doing with all this ore.”

“We can carve a house into one of the cave walls,” Garnet continued.

“Vivi can use his magic to help with demolition.”

“And I’ll tutor him before bed every night,” Garnet said, then bit her lip because she was careless

enough to bring up beds. She had been around Zidane long enough to know that his next move was likely going to be a raised eyebrow and a sly comment about just whose bed she was sharing in this scenario. But when she peeked over at him, he was smiling, looking up at the ceiling.

“Well now I don’t mind if we never find the exit,” he said.

She’d been expecting perversion, so the sweetness of the statement caught her off guard. She quickly looked down at her lap. She was the bad one, thinking about beds.

“Some people have lives like that,” she rambled absently, “It’s hard to believe.”

“I guess your life has never been simple, being raised in a castle.”

Garnet shook her head, “No. It was. I was always happy, as a child. It’s just... now it feels like that life belonged to someone else. All the people who cared about me then are gone, and the people I have now are...”

“I guess a thief is no king or queen,” Zidane said wryly.

“No, I don’t mean it like that. You are *different*, of course, but when I’m with you, I feel like I’m different too. I think if... if everything goes wrong in the end, then perhaps I’ll be alright even if I never go back to being Garnet. I can be Dagger... and... and live in a cave if I have to,” she finished lamely, trying to bring the mood back up. She was the one responsible for all of the danger they were in. It wasn’t right that she was always talking about her problems.

“Dagger or Garnet, I’m not going to make you stay in this cave forever,” he said, pushing up off the ground, “I might only be a thief, but I can do better than this. If we live together, our place is gonna have at least one window, minimum. That’s a promise,” he said, reaching down for her hand to help her up.

“One window, hm?” She said, clasping it, “Can it open to a view of the sea?”

Zidane pulled her up with a tsk, “Seaside’s expensive. How ’bout a city scape?”

“I’m not sure...”

“Aw, c’mon. At night, the lights are like stars in every direction, and when the mist rolls in, the world looks like it’s one big sky.”

It was subtle, but as he pulled her up, he didn't back off, leaving her trapped between himself and the wall. His face was very close to hers, their knees were brushing. She leaned back until her head met rock and could go no further.

"But I grew up in a city. How about the forest, or the mountains..." she said gamely, trying to fall back into their banter, even as he placed one hand against the cliff, boxing her into his space.

"We can figure something out," he said, and his face fell serious, "I know I pushed you to try and blend in back when we first escaped Alexandria. And now you've seen and done things that..." he shook his head, "That I wish you hadn't. But even if it feels like a lifetime ago, you're still the same kid that had parents who loved you. Now you just happen to have all of us, too."

Garnet clenched her teeth, trying to hold in her tears. He'd surprised her again, getting serious and emotional when she thought he was going to make a move on her.

"Garnet and Dagger are both you. You don't have to choose... Shoot, I wasn't trying to make you cry," he said with an exasperated smile. She laughed wetly, trying to duck her face out of sight, but with

her back to the wall and Zidane's arms on either side of her, the only place to hide was against his shoulder. She pressed her eyes into the wet ruffle of his collar, her arms tucked between their bodies, her fists resting against his chest.

She felt his hand skim through her hair, once, and then again, like he was stroking a cat. It was a distracting sensation... Without his gloves, his fingers pressed against her scalp, leaving tingly trails in their wake. She was almost ashamed when she noticed that her tears had dried up.

His hand brushed by her ear, finding her cheek to draw her face back into sight. But when she looked up, she found that he was so close that she wanted to hide again.

She stood frozen as he pushed back the wet strands of hair that were clinging to her face.

"You *do* have me. No matter what..." he said softly, now stroking her cheek without pretense, "You know that?"

But she couldn't nod or shake her head without bumping into his, and if she spoke... he was so close that it almost seemed rude...

She watched his eyes slide shut, his head tilt slightly as he leaned in. It was a surprise when she realized he was kissing her, but also not... she wasn't so surprised that he did it, more... she was shocked it was happening. To her. In a cave. And she... well, she thought she might have been ok with it.

However, she was afraid that so much of the kiss was a shock that she wasn't experiencing it properly. She tried, but then his hand brushed her hip, trailing around until it reached the small of her back and firmly pulled her body away from the rock and into him.

It was an active effort on his part, to press them as close together as possible, and to be honest, that effort had more of her attention than the kiss. Certainly his mouth moved against hers in a pleasant, enthusiastic sort of way, but he outpaced her as far as kissing skills; she really didn't know *what* she was doing, so she thought it best to do as little as possible so she didn't mess it up.

At one point she thought she felt him ghost a hand around her thigh and braced herself to be lifted off of her feet all together, but it seemed he thought better of it and changed course.

Instead, his hands grabbed hers where they were still balled against his chest. He broke their kiss. His very blue eyes, the wet hair sticking to his cheeks, and a wide, happy smile that wasn't teasing, scheming, or wise-cracking... She suddenly realized that Zidane was utterly mesmerizing. How had she gone so long without noticing? In silence, she let him pull her arms over his shoulders, removing the last barrier between them. He took full advantage of that fact, leaning in to kiss her again, his hand pressed between her shoulder blades and clutched at her hip, crushing her to him.

There didn't seem much else to do but wrap her arms around him in return, exploring his hair and the skin of his neck and bare shoulders and *really* try to figure out this whole kissing situation.

She wasn't sure how much time was passing. Her feelings, physical and emotional, pulled her under in waves, and it was hard to tell how long she stayed in them. There were times when she felt like Zidane might be the most important person that had ever come into her life, and kissing him bloomed a sensation in her chest that was almost too tender to examine. And then he would adjust his hips and she'd end up pinned against his thigh, barely able to keep her balance, but clutching on to him for dear

life because everything just felt so *good* all of the sudden.

It was in one of these moments that she gasped; she couldn't help it and she probably wouldn't have noticed she'd even done it, except that he had stopped kissing her.

"Sorry," she whispered as they broke apart, panting. He didn't look concerned though. His eyes were low and intense, his lips pink and thoroughly kissed. One of his hands traveled back up to her face and buried itself in her hair. He nudged her jaw to the side until her neck was exposed to him.

Her heart skipped a beat; this was new. Even when people kissed at the end of plays, it typically stopped there. Garnet knew, of course, about sex and reproduction, but when it came to romance, she thought that kissing was the beginning, middle, and end. But as he kissed the line of her neck, under her ear, down to her shoulder, exploring with his lips and tongue, she began to see that this was not the case at all.

Even with her face free, there still wasn't a speck of air between their bodies. Garnet found herself arching her neck to give him more access, using the wall as leverage to push closer to Zidane, and she

felt his gasp in the stillness of his body, the way his hands suddenly clutched her harder for a moment.

His tight grip brought her back to her senses a bit. Her gaze had been fixed in the middle distance, as hazy as her thoughts, but now she found she was looking around the edge of the wall, a stone passageway just visible around the corner.

A passageway? she wondered, blinking to clear her vision. Sure enough, the opening she was looking at was not the one they had entered through, but a new one entirely.

“Zidane? Have we looked down that cave over there?” she asked.

The only answer she got was the graze of his teeth against her neck. She gasped as her body seized at the feeling, but she tried to maintain focus.

“Z-Zidane?”

“Mm?” He finally replied, his tongue trailing across her collar bone.

“That cave over there?” She uncoiled her arm from around his shoulder and pointed. His hand quickly found her free arm and pressed it into the stone behind her.

“If it’s a cave, we’ve checked it,” he said, his face rising toward hers again.

“Are you sure? I don’t—” he cut off her words with another kiss, his tongue lapping into her partially open mouth, stroking hers. She lost her train of thought after that, lost track of breathing, and the reactions of her body as their mouths and limbs moved against each other. By the time he broke their kiss, she was completely at his mercy, panting, their foreheads resting against one another. In a daze, she followed his eyes as he glanced to the right where she’d been pointing a minute... no, maybe ten minutes ago.

“That cave? I’ve seen it...” he breathed, his half-lidded eyes settling back on her... until he stole another look over his shoulder.

“I...” he began, looking to the cave and back to her, then back to the cave. Finally, he gave her a long look, then swore. When she flinched (more from surprise than the bad language), he smiled apologetically, and briefly kissed her.

“Would it sound irresponsible if I said we could wait a few more hours for Vivi and Quina to come back before we check it out?” He asked, running his hands up and down her shoulders. As his lips met

hers again, she had to admit that his suggestion had some merit.

Maybe they've had merit all along and I just didn't have the experience or good sense to see it.

Garnet sighed against his kiss, wrapping her arms around him again.

They broke apart again, Zidane rumbling out a low, pained, groan, "You're so damn cute... But I guess we should go check it out. It wouldn't be right if I didn't give you a chance to catch your breath..." he said, holding her face in his hands. Abruptly, he squished her cheeks and grinned before letting them go, "You're a real hard task master, you know that?"

"S-sorry," she said, her head still muddled.

"Still, I'd rather work for you than Baku any day. The rewards are better," Zidane said with a grin.

Gently, he led her away from the wall to stumble toward their shoes and supplies, "And who knows, maybe this tunnel goes nowhere after all." He said, sounding hopeful.

Garnet laughed, completely out-of-sorts, before she replied, "If we're lucky."

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Author's note: I got lost in Fossil Roo ;-; To think I'd be betrayed by the pre-rendered backgrounds I love so much.

It would be cute if this turned into a loosely connected series of romantic scenes that could be injected into the game's plot, but I'm working through the game pretty fast. I doubt my writing could keep up. It's tempting though. The plot is so rife with opportunity. I mean, they canonically spend the night alone in a room together after this and then get "married". But as it is, I hope you enjoyed this one-shot.

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